

Annual Report 2023-24

Northern Territory Disability Strategy Action Plan 2022-2025



Momentum continues to grow and drive progress against the Disability Strategy Action Plan 2022-2025

The Action Plan includes:

5 Outcomes | 27 Priorities | 118 Actions

7 Accountability mechanisms

Vision

An inclusive Territory where people with disability are valued, respected and can contribute to community, no matter where we live.

Principles

Promote the dignity, autonomy, and freedom of people with disability.	Value the importance of culture to improving life outcomes.
Champion the key role of those who support people with disability: families, kinship families, carers, guardians, and significant persons.	Create environments that are culturally safe for Aboriginal people.
Ensure people with disability are not disadvantaged because of personal circumstances, such as age or home location.	Make people with disability the key decision makers in decisions that affect them, including by promoting collaboration and co-design between people with disability and other stakeholders.
Recognise the important role of Aboriginal peoples in achieving the outcomes of the Strategy.	Recognise that disability is only one part of someone's story.

This 2023-2024 Annual Report is the second report on progress against the 2022-2025 Action Plan under the 10-year Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022-2032 (the Strategy). It demonstrates the continued improvements occurring within our community and highlights the increasing focus on people with disability, their rights, and acknowledgement of their considerable contributions to the Northern Territory.

Tangible improvements have been made with over 90 per cent of the 118 actions from the Action Plan now completed or fully incorporated into the usual business of Northern Territory (NT) Government agencies, local governments and non-government organisations.

This report shows how these initiatives and actions have made a meaningful difference to the lives and experiences of people with disability, their families and carers. The diverse case studies and experiences, highlighting initiatives from remote communities to regional centres, are only the tip of the iceberg.

Thank you to those who have shared their journey. Your experiences reinforce the significance of the work being undertaken and the unwavering commitment of so many to break down barriers and build a better quality of life that is accessible and inclusive for all Territorians.

The Northern Territory Government proudly acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout the Northern Territory, and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal cultures, and to Elders both past and present. We particularly acknowledge all Aboriginal people with disability, their families, and their carers.

Recording progress against initiatives is monitored using the following status indicators:

COMPLETED

Completed: Action completed during reporting period

Business As Usual: Action has been incorporated into normal everyday operations

IN PROGRESS

In Progress: Actions are still being progressed and will be incorporated into business-as-usual functions following full implementation

Slight Delay: Progress may have been delayed during the reporting period

NT Disability Advisory Committee Chair Report

Callum Hooley, DAC Chair 2024

I am excited to reflect on the work undertaken in the previous 12 months by the Northern Territory Disability Advisory Committee (DAC).

The DAC is particularly proud of its involvement in the development of the Northern Territory Public Service EmployAbility Strategy 2024-2027, released by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. Our time with the Darwin Airport and the push they are making to improve accessibility was another highlight, assisted by several of our DAC members.

Further work we are progressing is seeking compliance from Telstra to increase the font size for instructions on sim and recharge cards and seeking engagement with Regional Councils and Local Government Areas across the Territory to build more accessible and inclusive amenities and transport systems. One of my first actions as Chair of the DAC was to send correspondence to the Barkly Regional Council highlighting the substantial barriers experienced by residents without accessible footpaths in the region and calling for a combined effort to improve them. This important work is still underway, and we will continue our focus, especially in our remote areas.

Like many people with disability across the country, we eagerly awaited the response to The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) and the Independent Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS Review).

This significant reform is welcomed and to support this important work, the DAC wrote to the Northern Territory Minister for Disability to advocate for the establishment of an Australian Disability Rights Act, in line with Recommendation 4.1 of the Disability Royal Commission. This fundamental right will have far-reaching benefits particularly in areas including open employment, inclusive education and accessible transport. It is an exciting opportunity for all of us to work together to create a future where the rights and dignity of people with disability are fully recognised, respected and protected under the law.

I am excited at the prospect that all governments can lead the way in promoting better communities, better services and better outcomes for people with disability. Both the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review calls for it. Many of our DAC members have spent countless hours contributing, reading, discussing and reviewing the outcomes of these recommendations and I commend you. However, we still have a way to go to realise change and our community needs strong voices. Thank you for your continued hard work to achieve this.

Lastly, a big thank you to the government agencies and non-government organisations that have reached out to the DAC to seek our input. I impress upon all sectors of business to utilise our knowledge of our community and our lived experience to achieve significant and efficient outcomes. At its core, the DAC was established to provide advice, and that advice comes from a place of significant experience and perspective and I encourage the utilisation of our collective knowledge and expertise.

We look forward to continuing this important work.

Outcome 1: People with disability have rights and choices which are protected and respected

29 ACTIONS

25 Completed | 4 In Progress

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

Building Disability Confidence 	More support for disability service providers • 22 referrals for NDIS training modules and workforce support provided by the Department of Tourism, Business and Asian Relations. • 109 service providers engaged by small business champions. • 23 referrals for external support and training in areas such as business and operational development.	Co-Response Model improving interactions between Police and Territorians with complex care needs. • Operates out of the Casuarina Police Station. • Police, Paramedics and mental health staff attend. • 517 jobs attended. • 37 jobs relating to persons with disability.	Disability Confident Training • eLearn modules created for Managers, Recruiters and Workforces. • 800 NT Government employees across the Territory completed training.
	Successful trial of a Student Advocacy Service • 175 families supported. • 95% of parents were satisfied with the Student Advocacy Service. • 90% of parents were satisfied with the outcome for their child. • Evaluation of the trial and review of potential advocacy providers to expand the service.	Broader reach for Adult Guardianship visits • Targeted visits to regional and remote areas including Katherine, Tennant Creek, Wadeye and Nhulunbuy. • Meetings on Country and in familiar environments. • 14% more represented people visited.	Easier access to therapeutic assessments for prisoners • Specialist positions created across all facilities to conduct assessments, coordinate therapeutic supports and facilitate NDIS access requests.

CASE STUDIES AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Priority: Deliver disability confident and accessible justice and corrections systems

Case study: Community Visitors Program home visit, Jeremy's story

The NT Community Visitor Program (CVP) is an independent service administered by the Anti-Discrimination Commission. It aims to ensure the rights of people being treated for mental illness or disability are upheld and their views and concerns are heard.

Community visitors are people employed directly by the CVP who regularly visit Mental Health Inpatient facilities and Disability Secure Care facilities to ensure an appropriate standard of care.

Jeremy¹ grew up in remote communities of the Northern Territory. His first language is an Aboriginal language, and he has a cognitive disability.

After facing criminal charges, Jeremy entered a custodial Disability Secure Care facility. Jeremy raised concerns with the CVP about his standard of care including what felt like an overly restricted environment and his inability to access interpreter services.

Through the CVP, progress was made to address the concerns raised by Jeremy and improve his relationship with staff. In addition, communication through 'picture story' was implemented to help him easily understand his care situation.

The CVP was also able to advocate for a five-day, four-night trip, for Jeremy to spend time on country with family. Jeremy told the CVP *"It was a good feeling thing – I enjoyed the days with family"*.

"There were a lot of donkeys and camels wandering around the community, looking for water. People would tell them to get away. They would smell water and make their way into the house yard to drink where the water is."

Jeremy spoke to the CVP of the importance of visiting country and that it had meant a lot to him, often smiling as he shared his stories and numerous pictures which are focused on family and family connection. During his visit home, Jeremy was also able to see a Ngangkari, a traditional healer. This was something that Jeremy had requested for some time and was a positive experience for him. *"Now I feel good inside. Before something was bothering me – now I'm feeling better; I feel it's livened me up a bit."*



'Uluru Base Walk', painted for NAIDOC week 2024.



¹ Some names in this story have been changed for privacy.

Priority: Deliver disability confident and accessible police, fire and emergency services

Case Study: Training programs for NT Police

Police training across the Northern Territory continues to promote diversity and inclusion to support accessibility.

Priority training options include increasing cultural competency through awareness and self-reflection and includes the delivery of Respectful Workplace Training and Respect, and Equity and Diversity Training programs.

This training was delivered to over 2,600 Police, Fire and Emergency Service members, staff and volunteers either face-to-face or online. Additionally, 106 participants completed the Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Care course.

Feedback received from trainees indicate the programs are well-received and effective in equipping staff with the knowledge needed to recognise and appropriately address workplace behaviour, including disability access and inclusion.

An improved interface with the community has been a significant achievement for Northern Territory first responders.



Outcome 2: People with disability are included and can engage, participate and contribute to community life

24 ACTIONS

21 Completed | 3 In Progress

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

Increasing community participation 	Greater diversity and inclusion on NT Government Boards and Committees • 1.2% of current Board members identify with disability. • Promotional materials including Easy Read resources.	Increased business participation and uptake of the NT Companion Card • 18% more cardholders. • 40% more participating businesses. • New independent Facebook Page. • Administered by Integrated disAbility Action Inc.	Increased opportunities for access to the arts • Dedicated Arts Access grant funding released as part of Arts Industry Development grants. • Focus on support for people with disability as artists, participants and audiences.
	Raising awareness and promoting inclusion 	New grant opportunity for International Day of People with Disability • 14 successful applicants sharing in funding of \$49,670. • Community events, activities and initiatives held on or around the internationally observed day of recognition on 3 December.	More tools for clubs, associations and organisations to champion inclusion • 7 Pillars of Inclusion implemented through the NTG Sport Integrity online toolkit and added to the NT Sport Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2025.

CASE STUDIES AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Priority: Increase access and inclusion across arts and culture programs

Case Study: This is Adrian's amazing art story

Known by some as 'the Van Gogh of the Central Desert', Central Australian visual artist Adrian Jangala Robertson travelled to the UK in May 2024 to attend his first international solo exhibition at the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery in London.

Arts NT, through an Arts Industry Development Grant, supported Adrian to attend his solo exhibition. An inspiring and exciting outcome, and proof that disability is no barrier to inclusion.

Adrian had never travelled overseas previously and embarked on the journey supported by the Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists collective, the Central Desert disability and arts community.

To add to the excitement, Adrian was nominated for three of the most prestigious art awards in Australia:

- **Wynne Prize** for the best landscape painting of Australian scenery in oils or watercolours;
- **Archibald Prize** for the best portrait, preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in art, letters, science or politics; and
- **Sir John Sulman Prize** for the best subject painting, genre painting or mural project.

Adrian has not only taken Aboriginal art to the world, but brought international acclaim to the heart of Australia, especially Alice Springs.

The 10-year NT Arts Strategy 2024-2034 includes an ongoing commitment to improve inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility for all.

In 2023-24, Arts NT invested \$7.1 million into the NT arts sector across 233 activities. Part of this funding was used to address barriers to participation in arts and cultural events and activities.

A further \$1.1 million in funding was provided to two strategic arts venues to ensure their facilities are physically accessible to the community including artists, arts workers, audiences and participants.



Priority: Increase access and inclusion across arts and culture programs

Case Study: This is Briseis' story



"It's my dream to go to the Olympics for Australia...I want to be like Cathy Freeman."

Growing up in the remote community of Ramingining in East Arnhem Land, teenager Briseis Brittan is a participant in the Northern Territory Sports Academy (NTSA) Futures Program, demonstrating her outstanding potential and dedication as a para-athlete.

Born with cerebral palsy, Briseis' journey is characterised by perseverance and sacrifice from her family, to facilitate her athletic development. By splitting their time between Ramingining and Darwin, Briseis' has greater access to resources and opportunities to pursue her passion with the ultimate goal to participate in the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

Briseis regularly competes in a range of events, including the 100m, 200m, 400m, long jump and shot put.

At Northern Territory and Australian All Schools Championship events, Briseis secured six medals, highlighting her exceptional talent and versatility.



With limited competitions held in the Northern Territory, Briseis often trains with and competes against athletes without disability. She is also working smarter, taking advantage of artificial intelligence to help assess and correct any slight imperfections in her technique so that she can focus her training and refine her technique.

Briseis is furthering her athletic career and achieving success on the international stage while inspiring other Territorians with disability through the NTSA Futures Program and beyond.

The NTSA Futures Program supports athletes with disability that are aspirational and have potential to progress on the pathway to the Paralympic Games. The program provides an enriching environment to engage, recognise and empower Territory athletes to optimise their potential and enhance their abilities to thrive in their sporting and non-sporting lives.

In 2023-24, 10 athletes accessed the program, participating NTSA gym programs and engaged with the NTSA leadership and wellbeing service.

The NTSA also offers coaching and officiating scholarships and Sport and Recreation Workforce Development offer volunteer grants for people with disability. Total Recreation and Disability Sport Australia NT (DSA NT) are funded to support athletes with nominations.

Priority: Support community services to be disability confident and inclusive

Case Study: Volunteering improves engagement and learning

Opportunities to promote and enhance engagement in the community for people with disability through volunteering is recognised as an excellent confidence builder and connector that assists in growing each participant's skill base, to allow them to explore other employment options.

Two people in Alice Springs have been volunteering at the Alice Springs Public Library for a number of years and have grown in self-confidence and work readiness, opening doors to future employment prospects.



Meet Ben.

Ben has been volunteering at the library for almost ten years and is the library's second longest serving team member!

Ben volunteers because he likes helping people and it allows him to be an active member of the community. His work at the library creates purpose and the library team feels just like a second family.

Ben loves reading, seeing joy on people's faces and making coffee. His ultimate dream is to open a café but says he will always make time to volunteer at the library. Ben is a much-loved member of the library team. He is always friendly, chatty, curious and diligent in his work. He is also the library's unofficial manga and anime aficionado, having started his collection at age 6.



Meet Jim.

Jim has been volunteering at the library since late 2021. Originally Jim volunteered 3 days a week, however, at the beginning of 2024 Jim was successful at securing a position at Imparja Television which has reduced his volunteering to every Wednesday.

Jim says he likes coming into the library as it is a serene space, especially in the staff workroom, and that the tasks delegated to him are enjoyable and sometimes even calming. The library staff always appreciate Jim coming in as he is always reliable, a great presence to have in the office and diligent with every task on hand.

“Networking and gaining transferable skills, confidence and experience are all benefits people can gain from volunteering. It is great to see volunteers go on to find employment in sectors they may have not entered otherwise and is an employment pathway many locals take, including myself!

Abby McCrickard Community Inclusion Officer, Alice Springs Town Council

Outcome 3: People with disability can access the places, information and services they need

22 ACTIONS

22 Completed

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

Improving Safety and Accessibility 	Improved safety of Multi-Purpose Taxis • Compulsory driver training and compliance checklists commenced in February 2024. • 59 MPTS operating across the Territory. • 15,988 journeys covered under the Taxi Subsidy Scheme and Lift Incentive Scheme.	Targeted infrastructure upgrades • 6 Pelican and Puffin (Pedestrian User-Friendly Intelligent) crossings installed across Darwin, allowing pedestrians extended crossing time. • Darwin Waterfront Corporation opened the first Changing Places facility in the Territory in March 2024.	Remote Passenger Transport Program • Grant round held annually. • 12 grants awarded to connect remote communities to major towns such as Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. • 5 grants awarded for intra-town services in Tennant Creek, Katherine, Tiwi Islands and Wadeye.
	Building Capacity 	New multi-disciplinary team for Danila Dilba Health Service exclusively focussed on children. • Progress and plan outreach clinics. • Drop-in clinics across many remote communities.	More accessible housing across the Territory • 391 accessible homes delivered under the Homebuild and Room to Breathe programs. • National building standards and Liveable Housing Design Guidelines (fourth edition, Silver level) mandatory for all new builds.

CASE STUDIES AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Priority: Enhance the accessibility of transport options

Case study: NT Disability Advisory Committee Darwin Airport visit

The Northern Territory Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) continues to make significant strides in advocating for people with disability. Their work has focused on key topics to address crucial issues and drive positive change for Territorians with disability and their families.

The DAC met with the Airport Development Group, providing feedback on the enhancements being considered for the Darwin International Airport redevelopment and broader Airport precinct.

Members walked through the newly renovated terminal where several accessibility improvements were showcased, including an adult changing facility and sensory upgrades to security screening processes. All adjustments have been designed to improve the experience of travellers with disability.

The introduction of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard initiative and training program enables airport staff to identify and appropriately interact with people with hidden disability, thereby understanding their needs and requirements when transiting.

The DAC congratulated the Airport Development Group on their commitment to improve accessibility and ease of navigation for people with disability within its precinct and conveyed their appreciation for the opportunity to provide a lived experience contribution to support the enhancements.



Representatives from the NT DAC meeting with the Darwin Airport Corporation to view the new accessible format design. From left to right: Alison Cunynghame, Alishia Lindsay, Cal Hooley, Alana Michell, Kyle Adams, Grant Lindsay, Kate Densmore, Charlie Marengo, Mick Fallon, April Hona, Melanie Cobbin, Rosie King.

Priority: Increase the choice of quality, culturally competent disability service providers across the Territory

Case study: Remote and very remote training opportunities, Jenifer's story

The Northern Territory Government supports two training programs in remote and very remote communities to increase the number of carers and culturally appropriate supports on country.

The Care for Career program, jointly funded by the National Priority Fund, and the User Choice program (funded solely by the Northern Territory Government) are delivered by a local Registered Training Organisation, Response Services Employment & Training Pty Ltd. This organisation proudly supports a large number of Aboriginal students and in the last 12 months reported 72 per cent Aboriginal student enrolment.

Jenifer², is a proud Aboriginal woman from the East Arnhem region, who has always been passionate about giving back to her community. Jenifer's journey into the care sector began when she enrolled in a Certificate III in Individual Support, determined to build a meaningful career in helping others. Despite facing challenges during her studies, Jenifer's determination and resilience saw her overcome every hurdle, celebrating her graduation in December 2023 alongside her family and friends.

Shortly after completing her Certificate III, Jenifer embraced an exciting new opportunity and enrolled in the Certificate IV in Community Services, eager to further develop her skills and continue her professional growth. Jenifer is filled with pride and ambition as she envisages becoming a leader and advocate for improved care in her community.

Currently working in her local remote community as a support worker, Jenifer provides culturally appropriate care to people with disability, seamlessly integrating her knowledge and skills into her daily work.



Photo: Jenifer and her fellow Certificate III participants.

By offering emotional support, navigating complex care plans and providing culturally appropriate care in her community, Jenifer's training has shaped her into a highly skilled and compassionate professional, and positions her as a rising leader in the disability sector.

As she prepares to complete her Certificate IV, Jenifer is continuing to inspire others in her community, paving the way for future generations. Through this wonderful work, people with disability are enabled to continue to live on country and receive culturally safe and appropriate care in their community.

² Some names in this story have been changed for privacy.

Outcome 4: People with disability have the skills and opportunities to participate in the economy and be financially secure

30 ACTIONS

27 Completed | 3 In Progress

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

Advancing inclusive education 	More Individual Student Transition Plans • 111 students with Individual Transition Plans. • Plans address each student's goals and ambitions. • Prepares their transition to post-school pathway.	Modified pathways for NT Certificate of Education and Training • 41 students completed their qualifications. • 182 students enrolled in modified subjects. • Schools supported to build capability to offer modified subjects.	Promoting student mental health and wellbeing • 'Be You' program pilot commenced in January 2024. • 20 schools adopted the program. • 13 schools have established Wellbeing and Inclusion teams to facilitate program implementation.
	Increasing employment opportunities 	More support for students transitioning to work • 15 students in a supported work experience program. • 1 student undertaking a school-based apprenticeship. • 4 students employed by their host worksite after their placement.	Innovative work experience within a familiar environment • Henbury School established the first Mini Woollies in March 2024. • Replicating a grocery store, the shopping experience includes stock, trolleys, checkouts and uniforms for students.

CASE STUDIES AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Priority: Support employers to be disability confident

Case study: Dine with Dinesh: interactive corporate luncheon

As part of the International Day of People with Disability celebrations, the NT Chamber of Commerce partnered with YouthWorX NT to present an interactive luncheon event and panel discussion with over 60 attendees from local Darwin businesses.

The "Employing People with Disability makes Good Business Sense" Luncheon promoted the benefits of employing people with disability, and aimed to engage, enable and highlight opportunities for young people living with disability in a broad range of industry sectors and empower the business community to be part of this journey for all Territorians.



The luncheon featured guest speaker Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM, an incredibly inspiring presenter, who shared his personal and professional journey. In 2010, Dr Palipana was involved in a car accident while he was studying medicine at Griffith University in Queensland. He graduated in 2016 as the first quadriplegic medical graduate in Queensland, and only the second in Australia.

As a passionate advocate for disability, he works tirelessly to promote inclusion and shares his lived experience and positive impact on improving lives of people with disability across all work environments.

Following the presentation, an open forum featuring guest panellists, Mrs Sarah Skopellos, Deputy Chair of the DAC and Lived Experience Disability Advocate, Damien Charles, NT Regional Manager of NEC and Paul Burgess, Complex Manager, Bunnings NT, discussed their experiences in the workforce and strategies on how businesses can better support people with disability in the workplace.



The keynote address and panel conversation were made available online to share and to encourage the wider business community to invest and support diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and support employers to be disability confident.

Priority: Increase employment of people with disability

Case Study: This is Ronish's journey in the NT Public Sector

Ronish commenced employment with the Department of Corporate and Digital Development through the Aboriginal Employment Program (AEP).

This 20-week employment program provides an introduction to working in the Northern Territory Government public sector and provides participants with additional support and guidance to complete required training. Through the AEP program, Ronish, who identifies as a person with disability, successfully completed a Certificate II in Workplace Skills in December 2023 and was offered a traineeship.

"I applied for the AEP to gain experience in the workplace and to engage in studies that I hoped would lead to employment. The AEP led me into a traineeship to further expand my work experience and gain a Certificate III in Business".

Following this, Ronish commenced a Certificate III in Business, supported by both her workplace and the Early Careers team, who provide monthly visits and is working towards completing her traineeship. This significant achievement showcases the success of both the AEP and Ronish's personal career ambitions and development.

Ronish is regarded as an asset to her current workplace, Bushfires NT headquarters in Acacia Hills, where she uses her administrative support skills daily.

The AEP includes a pastoral care component that provides an opportunity for trainees or workplaces to address any concerns and closely monitor training progression, workplace adjustments and development ensuring any issues can be addressed in a responsive and positive manner.

"The support I have received throughout the program has helped me to achieve tasks I never thought possible and set me up for future employment opportunities in the NT public service."



Priority: Increase employment of people with disability

Case Study: Jess' McDonald's story

Jessica is a Warlpiri and Gurindji woman from Kalkarindji currently living in Darwin. Jessica is profoundly deaf and has sought to improve her independent living and employability skills by becoming involved in the YouthWorx Encompass program.

The Encompass program is a person-centred service for people with disability to develop their skills, find employment and engage with other training or education opportunities to develop capacity.

During an industry visit, where participants get to see and experience businesses up close, Jessica immediately said that she wanted to work at "Maccas". With the support of her Youth Development Coach, Jessica has secured employment at McDonald's Palmerston.

Jessica loves working at McDonald's and says:

"It was hard at the start, but now I know what to do, it's good. I like seeing the customers through the window and saying hello".

Jessica has a range of responsibilities and enjoys "unpacking stock and putting it away, cleaning, making pancakes, and frying the chips and hash browns".

Yasmin Hahn, People and Culture Supervisor at McDonald's Palmerston, believes that working with Jessica and developing strategies to support her in the workplace has been revolutionary in building confidence across the entire team. The team has been able to adapt their communication with the use of simple Auslan signs and gestures to communicate with Jessica effectively.

"We adopted a 'silent kitchen' using different coloured utensils and trays for different products to eliminate the need for verbal directions."

"Jess is thriving in her role in the kitchen, and her enthusiasm for the job shines through every day. Jess' positive spirit and determination have been an uplifting reminder that with a little creativity and kindness, communication barriers can be overcome, and everyone can thrive; her positive energy has been truly inspiring to everyone around her."

"We're extremely proud of Jessica's 'can-do' attitude to anything she puts her mind to and how she never lets her disability get in the way of what she wants to do".

Encompass Program Coordinator, Tanya Pederick



Outcome 5: People with disability’s health and wellbeing is supported

13 ACTIONS

11 Completed | 2 In Progress

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

Focus on early health initiatives 	Healthy Under 5 Kids – Partnering with Families program continuing at health clinics across the Territory. • Over 7200 children (61%) assessed. • 291 children received further assessment and referral.	Newborn hearing screening for 2888 babies (97%). • 5 newborns with permanent hearing loss received further support and referral.	Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home (MESCH) visiting program implemented across three Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. • 690 families offered MECSH support. • 572 families enrolled. • 7608 home visits.
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CASE STUDIES AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Priority: Enhance early identification of disability and referral to early intervention services

Case study: Outreach allied health services support early intervention for children with developmental delay

The Community Allied Health Team (CAHT) have focussed on expanding services to a number of rural communities outside of Darwin, in areas where historically poor access and long wait times for community allied health services have been experienced.

CAHT provides outreach Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology and Physiotherapy services to people in Top End rural and remote communities through home and community visits. Visits are planned and delivered in partnership with local health, disability, and education services and supports including allied health assessments, service linking, advocacy and education programs.



The re-establishment of regular outreach visits has seen significant improvements in access to appropriate assessments, early support for children with developmental delay and guidance with NDIS access and planning processes. Community engagement across the region has raised awareness and strengthened pathways between health and disability services.

This is illustrated by the team's interaction with Tamika³, a 4-year-old girl who lives in a small rural community outside of Darwin, in the care of extended family. She was born pre-term and has a history of significant early life trauma. As part of healthy under 5s screening, a developmental delay was identified prompting a child health nurse referral to the CAHT team.

The referral was actioned within 2 weeks and an understanding of Tamika's needs, along with family goals and priorities, informed a plan for ongoing support.

By working in partnership with the family, the allied health professionals have achieved significant milestones, including NDIS support for both Tamika and her family and connection with other specialist services such as a Paediatrician.

Tamika's family have attested to the need to have allied health working alongside NDIS to support access as well as the benefits of allied health visits occurring in the local community – "it was great that you could come and see us at home and school".



Priority: Support all services to work together to improve a person's health outcomes

Case study: Maningrida Alternative Commissioning trial site

Work continues in Maningrida on the Alternative Commissioning trial to develop strategies and innovative ways to bring services to people living with disability in remote communities that have historically not been able to access the services they need. This work is being undertaken in partnership with the community to strengthen access to and utilisation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

As part of this work, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) together with the Northern Territory Government, have carried out Access Clinics in the community to improve NDIS accessibility for people with disability in Maningrida and surrounding homelands. With a focus on children, young people and women, the Access Clinic also supports development of NDIS plans and identification of the supports and services needed in the community. Other areas under consideration include:

- training and development of a local workforce to deliver NDIS services;
- bringing people home, cultural activities and greater inclusion in the community;
- housing for people with disability and housing for service providers; and
- establishment of a special education class in the school.

The outcomes of this trial will provide invaluable information on how governments can ensure Australians with disability living in remote and First Nation communities can access supports and provide lessons on how to build the capability of communities and governments, and the types of alternative commissioning that works best.

³ Some names in this story have been changed for privacy.

Accountability mechanisms

7 ACTIONS

ONGOING GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING

Keeping on track 	Northern Territory Government agencies meet quarterly • Meetings will continue moving forward. • Meeting frequency and format will be reconsidered as part of the development of the second Action Plan.	NT Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) oversee and monitor implementation • The DAC meet three times per year and the Strategy is a standing agenda item. • NTG agencies can bring items to the DAC for their input or consideration.	Review and development of Action Plan 2025-2029 • A review to consider new actions and incorporate the recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission is on track to develop the next iteration of the NT Disability Strategy Action Plan 2025-2029.
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Action: Implement ongoing governance mechanisms

Case study: NT Disability Advisory Committee

The NT Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) continues to provide advice to government and oversees the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure the wellbeing, rights and experiences of people with disability across the Territory are considered in all strategic policy amendments and project design.

Their voices are an important touchstone to ensure people with disability are considered in all consultation.

At a national level, representatives from the DAC contribute to discussion and participate in workshops, consultation events and relevant Advisory Councils, including representation on Australia’s Disability Strategy Advisory Council and the NDIS Participant Reference Group. This broader engagement ensures a Territorian perspective is considered by the Commonwealth as part of their strategic decision making.

The DAC’s dedication and invaluable insights, shape our approach to addressing the needs of Territorians with disability. Their role remains crucial to ensuring that the NT Government’s policies are current, inclusive and responsive.

Looking forward

National Disability Reform

Reforms to disability policy will address the findings of the Disability Royal Commission and the recommendations from the NDIS Review.

These two significant pieces of work are currently being considered and implemented through practical reform to improve laws, policies and practices across Australia to ensure an inclusive society where all people with disability are supported to live independently, free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

This will require a national effort, with input from all governments, state and federal, and engagement with the disability sector and the community.

While the Northern Territory disability landscape has already undergone considerable transformation over past years, significant work remains to address recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission to meet community expectations. In particular, more work is needed to increase access to services in remote locations and improve the cultural safety of services for Aboriginal people with disability.

By recognising and embracing the unique challenges of the Territory, the Northern Territory Government will adopt a comprehensive approach that prioritises accessibility, cultural sensitivity and collaboration with local communities to ensure the effective implementation of the Disability Royal Commission's recommendations and reforms arising from the NDIS Review.

Next Action Plan

The Department of People, Sport and Culture are leading a review of the first Action Plan under the NT Disability Strategy 2022-2032. Partner agencies and stakeholders are providing valuable feedback to inform the development of the second Action Plan.

Targeted actions under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 will be incorporated in the next iteration of the Action Plan along with recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review that are the responsibility of the NT Government.

Contact

For further information and to provide feedback please contact the Office of Disability:

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